

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 03267 020834Z  
ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 VO-05 CA-01 CIAE-00  
INR-07 NSAE-00 AID-05 /047 W  
-----001256 020840Z /17

P R 020720Z FEB 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9089  
INFO USMISSION GENEVA  
INS WASHDC  
AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR  
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

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INS/CO FOR COEXM

EO 11652: N/A  
TAGS: SREF TH  
SUBJECT: THAI REFUGEE POLICY - SITUATION IN SONGKHLA

1. AMBASSADOR ACCOMPANIED BY DCM CALLED ON DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERIOR GENERAL PREM TINSULANON FEB 1 TO DISCUSS SITUATION IN SONGKHLA AND THAI REFUGEE POLICY. DOLA DIRECTOR GENERAL DAMRONG SUNTHONSARATHUN, DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE INTERIOR, POLICE MAJOR GENERAL SRISAK DHAMARAKS AND DIRECTOR OF REFUGEE OPERATIONS CENTER, COL KAMON PRACHUAMO WERE ALSO PRESENT.

2. IN DISCUSSION, AMBASSADOR REITERATED OUR CONCERN ABOUT REPORTS OF SPORADIC FOOD SHORTAGES AT SONGKHLA CAMP AND OUR HOPE THAT BETWEEN RTG, UNHCR AND OURSELVES THIS PROBLEM COULD BE FINALLY RESOLVED. DAMRONG INDICATED THAT HE HAD LOOKED INTO FOOD SITUATION DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO SONGKHLA CAMP. IN DAMRONG'S VIEW THERE HAD  
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PAGE 02 BANGKO 03267 020834Z

BEEN PROBLEMS FOR ONLY ONE PERIOD, BECAUSE OF PARTICULAR DIFFICULTIES INVOLVING FOOD CONTRACTORS REFUSING TO PROVIDE SUPPLIES ON CREDIT BASIS. HOWEVER, DAMRONG STATED MOI IS DISCUSSING WITH BANKS HOW TO ENSURE SMOOTH FLOW OF FUNDS FOR FOOD PROCUREMENT AND FOOD SITUATION NOW IS NOT A PROBLEM. AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER INSTRUCTIONS REPORTEDLY GIVEN TO POLICE TO DISCOURAGE

THAI FISHERMEN FROM HELPING REFUGEES GET ASHORE.

3. ON BROADER QUESTION OF RTG REFUGEE POLICY, DAMRONG REPLIED OBLIQUELY THAT, AS PRIMIN INDICATED, RTG HAS MODIFIED ITS POLICY IN ACCPETING REFUGEES AND DAMRONG HAD CONVEYED THIS TO SONGKHLA AUTHORITIES.

4. COL KAMON THEN INDICATED THAT MINISTRY STILL REMAINS SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT SLOW PACK OF REFUGEE OUTFLOW FROM THAILAND. HE SAID THAT VERY FEW OF THE REFUGEES HAVE SO FAR LEFT LAEM SING CAMP AND MANY OF THOSE WHO HAD LEFT SONGKHLA ARE STILL AT BANGKOK TRANSIT CENTER AWAITING PLACEMENT IN US. KAMON SUGGESTED THAT USG CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING A RECEPTION CENTER OR CAMP IN US TO HOUSE THOSE REFUGEES WHO HAVE BEEN APPROVED FOR ENTRY BUT ARE AWAITING SPONSORS. GENERAL PREM HEARTILY ENDORSED KAMOL'S SUGGESTION OF OPENING US RECEPTION CAMPS. AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THAI DESIRE TO EXPEDITE PROCESSING BUT THAT CONCEPT OF OPENING A TRANSIT CENTER IN THE US HAD BEEN CONSIDERED AND DISAPPROVED SOME TIME AGO.

5. IN COURSE OF DISCUSSION DAMRONG INDICATED THAT MOI STILL REMAINS VERY HOPEFUL ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF SIGNIFICANT RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES. IN THAT CONTEXT HE SAID THAT LARRY WARD, PRESIDENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 BANGKO 03267 020834Z

OF FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY INTERNATIONAL WOULD BE VISITING BANGKOK NEXT WEEK, POSSIBLY ACCOMPANIED BY WIFE OF US AMBASSADOR TO CANADA. WARD'S PURPOSE IS TO DISCUSS FURTHER THE POSSIBILITY OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN LATING AMERICAN (BANGKOK 25318 AND LA PAZ 9725 OF 1977). AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED HOPE THAT THIRD COUNTRIES WOULD ACCEPT REFUGEES BUT NOTED THAT USG SEEMED LESS CONFIDENT THAT LATIN AMERICAN POSSIBILITIES WOULD MATERIALIZE.

6. DAMRONG AGAIN MENTIONED HIS LONG PLANNED AND OFTEN DELAYED TRIP TO CERTAIN LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES TO DISCUSS THESE RESETTLEMENT PROPOSALS. HE INDICATED THAT UNDER SECRETARY WINYU ANGKHANARAK AND HIMSELF WOULD GO AND ALREADY HAVE PREPAID TICKETS PROVIDED BY FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY INTERNATIONAL. DAMRONG DID NOT GIVE ANY DETAILS OF HIS PROPOSED ITINERARY BUT SAID THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO TRAVEL THROUGH WASHINGTON FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION WITH USG OFFICIALS THERE IN REFUGEE AREA. AMBASSADOR ASSURED HIM THAT HE WOULD BE VERY WELCOME IN WASHINGTON.

7. COMMENT: PREM AND DAMRONG MADE CLEAR THAT THEY CONSIDERED SONGKHLA SITUATION UNDER CONTROL BOTH AS

FAR AS RTG REFUGEE POLICY AND FOOD SITUATION IS CONCERNED.  
AT SAME TIME, IT IS CLEAR MOI SENIOR OFFICIALS ARE  
INCREASINGLY SENSITIVE TO OUR STRONG DEMARCHES OF THE  
PAST TWO WEEKS AND PURPORT TO BELIEVE THAT SONGKHLA  
SITUATION HAS NOT BEEN AS BAD AS DESCRIBED BY PRESS OR  
OUTSIDE OBSERVERS, INCLUDING THE EMBASSY. HOWEVER,  
DESPITE THINLY DISGUISED IRRITATION OF MOI, BELIEVE  
OUR APPROACHES HAVE HAD SALUTATORY EFFECT ON SONGKHLA  
SITUATION, AT LEAST FOR THE NEAR TERM.

8. BELIEVE IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE MAKE MAJOR EFFORT  
TO MOVE BOAT CASE REFUGEES OUT OF THAILAND AT A FASTER  
PACE OVER THE NEXT MONTH. OUR PERFORMANCE IN PROCESSING  
AND APPROVING CASES ELIGIBLE FOR ADMITTANCE UNDER OUR  
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PAGE 04 BANGKO 03267 020834Z

PROGRAMS HAS BEEN OUTSTANDING. HOWEVER, THE DELAYS  
IN ACTUAL DEPARTURES PRESENTS SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS WITH  
THAI WHICH WILL BE EXACERBATED IF IN FACT BOAT CASE  
REFUGEE ARRIVALS INCREASE OVER THE NEXT MONTHS AS IS  
POSSIBLE AS WEATHER CONDITIONS CHANGE. (BANGKOK 3192  
GIVES SUMMARY OF PRESENT STATUS OF THIS SITUATION.)  
WHITEHOUSE

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** REFUGEES, POLICIES  
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**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
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**Disposition History:** n/a  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014